CHAPTER 18 『KUMAMI AND KOHIME』

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ヒュン

ドロップ
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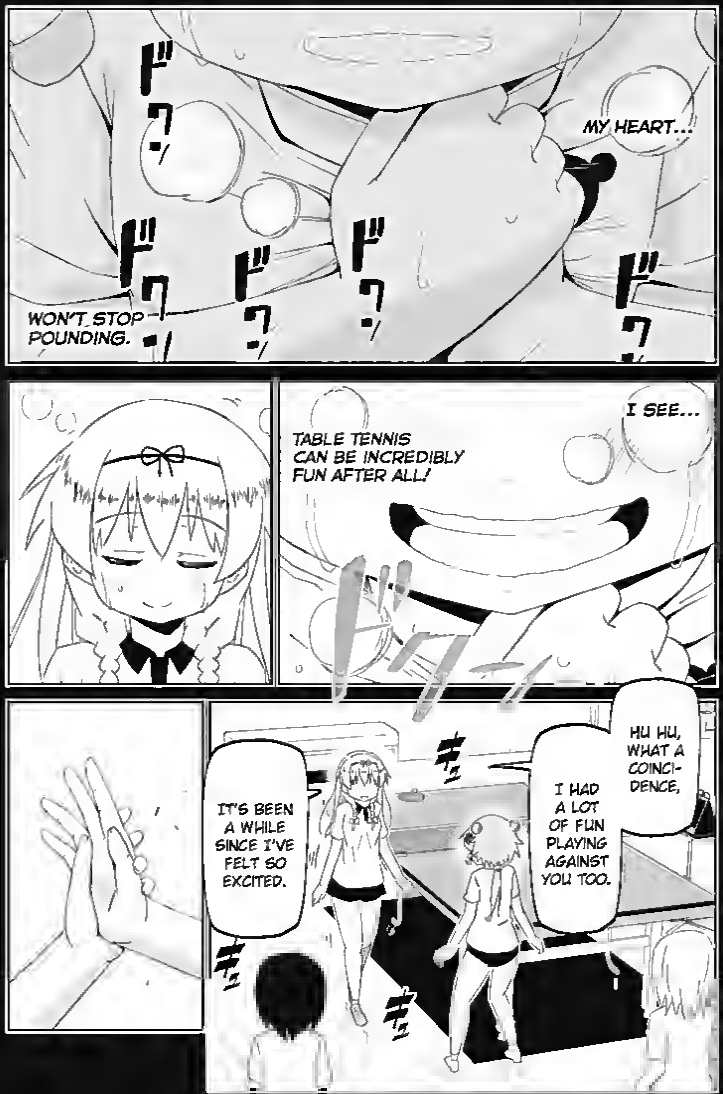
HAA
HU HU. PARDON ME, BUT YOU WERE SUCH A LITTLE TROUBLE-MAKER,
IN SPITE OF MYSELF,
I MIGHT HAVE GONE A BIT OVERBOARD
.....
...
STILL, YOU'RE ONE FASCINATING PERSON
YOU JUST LOST TO ME,

HAA
HAA
SO...
WHY ARE YOU SMILING LIKE THAT?
...!
HAA
HAH
HAA
HAA
HUH? THAT'S WEIRD.
I SHOULD BE FRUSTRATED FROM LOSING, YET I CAN'T STOP MYSELF FROM SMILING.
HAH
HAA
I'M NOT SURE MYSELF.
PLAYING WITH YOU WAS JUST SO MUCH FUN.
I JUST STOPPED CARING ABOUT WHO WOULD WIN THE MATCH AT SOME POINT.


MY HEART...
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ドク
ドク
ドク
ドク
WON'T STOP POUNDING.
I SEE...
TABLE TENNIS CAN BE INCREDIBLY FUN AFTER ALL!
ドクー
HU HU, WHAT A COINCI-DENCE,
I HAD A LOT OF FUN PLAYING AGAINST YOU TOO.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE FELT SO EXCITED.

ドク
MY HEART IS STILL POUNDING SO STRONGLY IN MY CHEST
きゅ…
ドク…
ドク…
…..
ドク…
…
…!
AH! AAH, I'M SO SORRY!
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ペコ
I JUST WALKED IN HERE AND STARTED WREAKING HAVOC ALL OVER THE PLACE
I'M… I'M ALREADY LEAVING FOR TODAY SO
OH, THAT'S A SHAME

MY NAME IS KAGURAZAKA KOHIME.
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO COME BACK ANYTIME.
...
I'M TSUKINOWA KUMAMI
"..."
I'LL...
COME AGAIN
...
THAT GIRL... HER HEART WAS REALLY RACING

AND SO, I STARTED PLAYING AT THAT TABLE TENNIS HALL.
DO THAT TO HER?
DID MY PLAYING...
SHE'D PRACTICE THERE AFTER CLUB ACTIVITIES AT TSUBAME ACADEMY WERE OVER.
THE HALL WAS RUN BY CAPTAIN KOHIME'S FAMILY.
TABLE TENNIS Queen
BUT MOST OF ALL...
SHE WAS SOMEBODY WHO COULD ACTUALLY POSE A CHALLENGE TO ME.
THAT FEELING OF LIBERTY FROM BEING ABLE TO PLAY WITHOUT ANY RESTRAINTS WAS IRRESISTIBLE.

SEEING SOMEBODY GET SO EXCITED FROM PLAYING AGAINST
IS PROBABLY WHAT MADE ME SO HAPPY.
9
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HOW'S THAT, KUMAMI?
TODAY, IT'S MY VICTORY AGAIN!
RIGHT, A-CHAN
Hehe!

KOHIME-SAN CAN START A BOLD OFFENSE RIGHT AT THE RECEIVE ALREADY
I HAVE TO PRACTICE MY RECEIVES THOUGH! YOU HAVE SOME PRETTY NASTY SERVES, I'M HAVING A HARD TIME WITH THOSE...
YEAH...
KOHIME-SAN CAN CREATE BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE THIRD BALL THOUGH
I DID SOME REALLY NICE SERVES TODAY TOO!
YEAH...
KOHIME-SAN'S SMASH WOULD PROBABLY HAVE A HARDER TRAJECTORY
THAT LAST SMASH WAS PERFECT, WASN'T IT?
YEAH...
IF IT WERE HER...
KOHIME-SAN...
WHAA?!
Y-YEAH...
LET'S KEEP WORKING HARD, OKAY? KUMAMI!
JUST BEING WITH A-CHAN
ALREADY GETS MY HEART PUMPING.
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I HAD A LOT OF FUN TODAY.
WHY MUST PLAYING WITH HER BE SO BORING?
HU HU...
WHEN I'M PLAYING WITH YOU, I GET SO WORKED UP.
I COMPLETELY FORGET THE PASSAGE OF TIME
...
THOUGH I HAVE TO SAY, YOU HAVE A VERY WILD PLAYING STYLE
ACTUALLY... I DON'T USUALLY PLAY SO AGGRESSIVELY. NORMALLY, I PLAY AS A CHOPPER.
THERE'S THIS GIRL WHO'S VERY SPECIAL TO ME...
SHE PLAYS TABLE TENNIS TOO, AND SHE'S SERIOUSLY AIMING TO BECOME NUMBER ONE.
BUT THE THING IS...

SHE'S WEAKER THAN ME.
I DON'T WANT TO TRAMPLE ON HER FEELINGS...
SO I USUALLY HOLD MYSELF BACK WHEN PLAYING
BUT HERE I CAN GO ALL OUT...
AND YOU'LL STILL BE THERE TO FACE ME HEAD ON
PLAYING PING PONG HERE
HAS BEEN EXTREMELY FUN.

IN THAT CASE, HOW ABOUT COMING OVER TO TSUBAME?
...
EH?
IT'S TRUE THAT THE MAIN REASON I PLAY AT THE HALL IS FOR TRAINING,
BUT I'M ALSO THERE TO SCOUT PROMISING MEMBERS FOR OUR TEAM AT TSUBAME.
SCOUT?
THAT'S RIGHT
I HAVE TO MAKE TSUBAME STRONGER AT ALL COSTS.
...
YOU'RE THE BRIGHTEST PLAYER I'VE EVER MET.
WHEN WE FIRST PLAYED AGAINST EACH OTHER...
EVEN NOW, WHENEVER WE PLAY, THAT POUNDING IN MY CHEST JUST WON'T CEASE.

I FEEL THE SAME...
WE GET TO SPEND SO LITTLE TIME TOGETHER HERE...
WON'T YOU COME TO TSUBAME, SO WE CAN DEEPEN OUR BONDS DAY AND NIGHT?
ぎゅぅぅぅ
I WON'T ASK FOR AN IMMEDIATE ANSWER.
BUT WILL YOU PLEASE CONSIDER IT?
U-UM...
DOES THAT MEAN...

whoosh
HANKO

U-UH
DID YOU SEE IT?
...
ER...
THAT'S "WANKO", RIGHT?
THOSE ARE PRETTY CUTE UNDERWEAR FOR A MIDDLE SCHOOLER TO BE WEARING...
THIS ONE IS CALLED "HANKO"!
...?

THIS IS MY DOLL ROOM.
YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON I LET IN HERE.
WOW! IT'S FILLED WITH WANKOS.
SO YOU'RE A WANKO FANATIC!
COULD YOU PLEASE SAY "COLLECTOR"?
I REALLY LOVE THIS LITTLE MASCOT.
BEFORE I KNEW IT, MY COLLECTION HAD GOTTEN THIS BIG.

THIS IS WANKO'S BIG SISTER, HANKO.
I'M PARTICULARLY FOND OF HER
BUT... YOU KNOW... THIS CHARACTER IS AIMED AT CHILDREN, RIGHT?
YOU DON'T WANT PEOPLE KNOWING YOU HAVE SUCH A CHILDISH HOBBY, SO YOU'VE KEPT IT A SECRET FROM THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU?
...
TO BE HONEST, I WANT WEAR CUTE WANKO SOCKS, HANG A WANKO KEYCHAIN FROM MY BAG AND DO ALL SORTS OF THINGS LIKE THAT, BUT THAT'S TOO EMBARRASSING.
THAT'S WHY I I THOUGHT MAYBE... I COULD GET AWAY WITH JUST THE UNDERWEAR!
FFF
A HA HA! SO THAT'S WHY YOU WERE WEARING THOSE CUTE PANTIES?
COULD YOU NOT LAUGH SO HARD?!
I'M SORRY! IT WAS JUST SO UNEXPECTED! PFFT!
あっ

BE THAT AN OBJECT, OR BE IT A PERSON. UNDER-STAND?
YOU KNOW,
I JUST CAN'T RELAX UNLESS I HAVE MY FAVORITE THINGS BY MY SIDE.
ABOUT THAT INVITATION TO TSUBAME,
I'M EAGER TO HEAR YOUR REPLY
BAM
1年5組
WHICH SHOULD I PICK?
...

WHAT'S GOING ON, KUMAMI?! YOU'RE ALWAYS SKIPPING PRACTICE, LATELY!
NOW THAT CAPTAIN KIRUKA IS ABSENT TOO..
WITHOUT YOU AROUND, I GET LONEL... I CAN'T REALLY GET COMPETITIVE WITH ANYONE.
...
YOU'RE COMING TODAY, RIGHT?!
IT'S BEEN AGES SINCE WE'VE HAD A MATCH!
AAH
PART OF THE REASON FOR THAT WAS HOW FUN IT WAS PLAYING WITH CAPTAIN KOHIME
IT SEEMED AS IF...
I WASN'T GOING TO BE ABLE TO HOLD BACK MUCH LONGER.
BUT I WAS ALSO SCARED OF PLAYING AGAINST A-CHAN
Let's have a match before everyone else arrives.

ガアアア..
まま!
カカカカ
BUT PLAYING AGAINST HER DOES
まっ
JUST BEING AROUND KOHIME-SAN DOESN'T MAKE MY HEART RACE,

WITH A-CHAN, MY HEART RACES WHEN I'M AROUND HER,
BUT NOT WHEN I PLAY AGAINST HER
EXCEPT WHEN...
SHE MAKES THAT CRYING FACE.
BUT THAT'S WRONG!
IF I HAVE TO MAKE A-CHAN CRY...

HER KINDNESS,
HER SMILE,
HER SILLINESS,
I REALLY DON'T
WANT TO SEE THAT.
THAT'S WHY...
THAT'S WHY I'LL....
THAT'S THE A-CHAN
I LIKE!

DESTROY HER!
KUMANOSUKE-SAN?!

YA THINK AGARI'S GONNA WIN EVERY GAME SHE PLAYS WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A SETBACK?
THAT'S NEVER GONNA HAPPEN!
SOMEDAY, SHE'S GONNA FEEL THE TASTE OF REAL FAILURE.
WHAT YOU'VE PUT HER THROUGH SO FAR WON'T EVEN COMPARE TO IT.
IN THAT CASE, YA MIGHT AS WELL
DESTROY HER YOUR-SELF.

WOULDN'T YA RATHER DO IT WITH YER OWN HANDS?
SHE'S JUST GONNA END UP DESTROYED BY SOME RANDOM STRANGER ANYWAY.
RIGHT.
WITH MY OWN... HANDS?

IT'S BECAUSE SHE'S SO PRECIOUS
THAT I HAVE TO DESTROY HER.
ﾆﾔｯ

KUMAMI! WHAT WAS THAT..?
HEY, WAIT! THE GAME'S NOT OVER YET!

I'M SORRY.

LAST MATCH.
4
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THAT WAS ME AND A-CHAN'S
KU-MA-MI!!! !!!
アアアア..
Queen
AND SO...
アアアアア...

I CHOSE TO BECOME A TABLE TENNIS PLAYER AT THE TSUBAME GIRLS' ACADEMY.
HAVING BEEN CHOSEN AS CAPTAIN KOHIME'S FAVORITE.

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キュッ
(KUMAMI) 3 - 8 (AGARI)
...
I'LL NEVER FORGET IT.
3018
Suzumi
Sakura

DURING THAT LAST MATCH WE PLAYED,
THAT FEELING
THAT DARK SENSATION.
IF THAT IS THE REAL YOU,
THEN YOU'VE BEEN HIDING YOUR STRENGTH FROM ME ALL OF THIS TIME, RIGHT?
IF THAT'S TRUE
"7" "7"
THEN I'M...
THIS KUMAMI IS A FAKE!
I WANT TO PLAY AGAINST THE REAL KUMAMI!

ドクン
ドゴッ
I'VE STAYED AWAY FROM YOU ALL THIS TIME TO PROTECT YOUR SMILE...
NO, A-CHAN. IF YOU KEEP BEING SO AGGRESSIVE, I WON'T BE ABLE TO HOLD BACK.
AT THIS RATE, I'LL...
"WON'T YOU SHOW US THE REAL YOU?"
"I WANT TO PLAY AGAINST THE REAL KUMAMI!"

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(AGARI)
10 - 4
(KUMAMI)
DID SHE JUST SCORE?
EH?
WHAT HAPPENED?
HE!
YOU JUST COULDN'T KEEP YER TRAP SHUT.

YA WANNA SEE IT SO BAD? I'LL SHOW YA!
THE REAL KUMA-MI!
...
THAT'S RUDE, KUMA-NOSUKE-SAN.

IT'S BEEN SO LONG ...

FOR SO LONG, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
BUT NOW...
I'VE FINALLY MADE UP MY MIND.
LET'S SETTLE THE SCORE FROM BACK THEN
FROM THAT DAY.
THAT DAY?
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NO WAY. THIS IS...
IT'S THE SAME AS MY LAST MATCH AGAINST KUMAMI...
TIME TO "RESUME" THE MATCH.
...!
A-CHAN...
I'M SORRY.

WITH BODY AND SOUL,
I WILL
YOU
DESTROY
WE FINALLY GET TO SEE IT.
THE REAL KUMA-MI.

A DRIVE?!
ANOTHER ONE?!

THAT'S ..
WHY IS A CHOPPER LIKE KUMAMI PLAYING CLOSE TO THE TABLE LIKE THAT?!
A DRIVER'S PLAYING STYLE!
PRECISELY AS IT TURNS OUT..
KUMAMI-SAN HAD MORE TALENT AS A DRIVER THAN AS A CHOPPER.

ONE OF HER DRIVES IN PARTICULAR MADE ME REALLY EXCITED.
BLUSH

THAT BEAUTIFUL RIGHT ARM RELEASES
HER MOST SUPERB SHOT.

THE SPEED DRIVE.

(KUMAMI) 5 - 10 (AGARI)
SHAKUNETSU NO TAKKYUU MUSUME
5
(END)

WITCH HANKO